

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

August 11, 2004

8:00 a.m.

Tier One Center

1221 N Street

<i>Members Present</i>	Jon Camp Jim Fram (absent) Lynn Green (absent) Matt Harris Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth Lori McClug (absent)	Annette McRoy (absent) Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur (absent) Mike Sisk Clay Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg (absent) Terry Werner (absent)
<i>Others Present</i>	Jason Albers Brenda Bergman Thomas Brennan Dennis Burns David Cary Jeff Cole Carol Connor	Jennifer Dam Nadine Fogsrt Karl Fredrickson Ann Harrell Bill Lee Tad McDowell Polly McMullen	Andy Miller Kent Morgan Darl Naumann Brian Praeuner Patrick Siegman Myrna Tewes Michele Abendroth

1. Call to Order

Cecil Steward called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. He asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves. He stated that the Downtown workshop the previous evening was a success, not only in terms of the approximately 300 people in attendance, but the discussions that took place as well. He then introduced George Crandall and Don Arambula of Crandall Arambula.

2. Public Comment Period

Public input was sought following the comments from the committee.

3 Workshop Summary and Master Plan Update

George Crandall complimented the group on the outreach efforts for the workshop as the attendance was outstanding. He then presented a PowerPoint presentation of some of the slides from the workshop. They included a review of the consultant team, the general objectives, the study area, the scope of work and schedule, the existing conditions of Downtown, transportation conditions, the trails system, and examples of things that have been done in other communities.

He then reviewed the rating system to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the streets in Downtown. Centennial Mall is a great opportunity because of its natural qualities and buildings, but it is also a constraint because of the edge conditions and fountains. The University is an

opportunity, but also a constraint on how to connect it to Downtown.

Following the presentation at the workshop, the workshop participants were asked to complete a *Response Sheet* which requested the participants to identify their general issues and concerns, issues and concerns with the Downtown shuttle, and issues and concerns with pedestrians/bicycles. After a brief review of the ballots, the general issues and concerns most identified were the lack of public/green space along with the need for more retail and the need for more housing opportunities. Other areas mentioned were a grocery store, traffic, a library, connection to the Haymarket, revitalizing Centennial Mall, and blank walls. Parking concerns were not very strong. There were a lot of comments about the shuttle service, which can be summarized as improving the service. There was also strong sentiment for improving the bike system.

Mr. Crandall stated that they will summarize these comments and distribute them to the committee.

4. Committee Questions, Discussion

Mr. Steward asked each of the members to state their impressions of the workshop.

Deb Johnson stated that she was deeply impressed with the workshop. She was at a table with citizens who had been in Lincoln for many years. There was a strong consensus for what people want in Lincoln.

Dan Massoth stated that he has had many people tell him that they don't go Downtown because they feel there is a lack of parking. Although it was not identified as a top concern, he feels that it should be given priority.

Ed Swotek stated that he was very encouraged after the workshop as people are very passionate and have strong feelings about Downtown. He feels the top concerns are important, but it has to come under a package of Downtown having a family-friendly atmosphere. He feels the notion of the lack of parking is a misconception, which is a challenge from an education standpoint.

Clay Smith added that parking safety is also concern, as some people feel that parking in Downtown is unsafe. He feels that Antelope Valley could solve some of the greenspace issues. In terms of rehabilitation, Lincoln doesn't have as much building stock available to rehabilitate into housing, and that is a challenge to determine where those spaces are.

Becky VandeBogart stated that she would like to see a family-friendly environment in Downtown also. She feels that building a Downtown central hub would bring people into Downtown. As people become more comfortable with Downtown, they will continue to come back.

Jane Stricker stated it was interesting to see different perspectives of retail owners. Art and biking were also topics of discussion at her table.

Michelle Waite stated that most of the discussion at her table centered on having a family- and

pedestrian-friendly environment in Downtown. They came to the conclusion that parking in Downtown is not an issue.

Jon Camp stated that he was impressed with the number of people at the workshop. He feels that it is important to have as many people involved in the process so they feel they are part of the solution. He stated that it was encouraging to have people mention the Downtown shuttle. He appreciated the brain-storming and the openness of the process.

Matt Harris complimented the team on how they facilitated the workshop and their knowledge of Lincoln. One of things his group discussed is the challenge in bridging the gaps in the various components of Downtown.

Jessica Kennedy stated that we need to be aware of the fact that there were voices who were not at the workshop. There is also the public perception that “nothing will happen.” Funding issues are also a concern that will need to be addressed.

Mike Sisk stated that although he was not able to attend the workshop, he feels having a green space is important. He stated that security is something that needs to be addressed.

Will Scott commented that he could not be at the workshop, but he is excited that a “buzz” was created and that there are a lot of people who want to provide input.

Kent Seacrest stated that he sat with a group of seniors who live Downtown, and none of them want to move. They are concerned with the lack of retail. Parking was not an issue to them. He also commented that the workshop process was a “home run.”

Ed Swotek added that he feels there is a sleeping giant on the east side, that being Antelope Valley. He is concerned that as Antelope Valley gains momentum, that the emphasis on Downtown could be lost. He feels they can complement each other, but cannot compete against each other.

Deb Johnson stated the Updowntowners goal is the core of Downtown. People need to understand the relationship between all these projects.

Cecil Steward complimented staff on the media involvement. He also complimented the consultants on the success of the workshop. He feels that Downtown will not compete with the shopping centers, nor should it try to do so. He feels that Downtown being the ‘destination’ is the wrong idea; instead, he feels that Downtown should be a neighborhood. We have a unique opportunity with state government, the University, the Haymarket, and Antelope Valley. The economics will be dynamic if we get all those forces focused to the center. But it will never be that way unless we have housing that supports the retail, the university, new job creation and is primarily locally owned. He hopes that the consultants will focus on connectivity with the edges of that boundary.

Mr. Steward then asked if there were comments from the audience. The comments included the following:

Currently, parking is structured essentially to be a revenue producing agency for Downtown. To some degree, this puts it at odds with the parking system that is aligned with the larger strategic vision of Downtown.

Polly McMullen added that parking perception is a big issue, but supply is also a critical issue. There is no monthly parking available anywhere in Downtown. There is a lot of vacant retail space that will not lease unless parking is available.

In terms of parking, fixing the perception is important, but also creating a safer feeling in terms of better lighting and security is critical. It could also possibly be beneficial to consider other marketing efforts to get people to come Downtown.

Karl Fredrickson stated as a community we need to come up with solutions for financing.

Jessica Kennedy stated it is important to find other alternatives for transportation during those times when public transportation is not in operation.

The Carl Walker Associates representatives were impressed with the generosity of Downtown, as all of Lincoln's parking meter revenues go to the City general fund. He was also impressed with the care shown to the employees in parking. He feels that we can do a great deal in reforming the parking.

Ed Switek asked how parking enforcement is addressed in other cities. A Carl Walker Associates representative replied that parking needs to be reserved for the customers and short-term parking. With the current price structure, Lincoln is rewarding the long-term parking. Mr. Arambula stated that some of these issues are critical for retail.

It was suggested that perhaps the ticket for the first offense could be waived. This would enable us to get the repeat offenders.

Dan Massoth stated that a program for discounted parking for employees at night would be beneficial. This would allow for premium spaces to be kept open.

Ed Switek asked the consultants for feedback on what other University cities have done to encourage other uses of the Downtown for students. Mr. Crandall stated that it varies from city to city. Improving the connectivity is beneficial. Also, it is important to create other opportunities for students to come into Downtown. Once you do that, you will see a better mix of students in Downtown.

5 Next Steps in Process

Mr. Crandall stated that this feedback has been very helpful and important. They will take this information and meet with the team to establish some direction.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 a.m.